

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SINGAP 03323 01 OF 02 050848Z
ACTION EA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8238

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SINGAPORE 3323

EA ONLY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, SN
SUBJ: EMBASSY COMMENTS ON DRAFT HUMAN RIGHTS PLAN

REF: STATE 173142

1. WE FIND DRAFT HUMAN RIGHTS EVALUATION PLAN FOR SINGAPORE
GENERALLY IN LINE WITH OUR OWN ANALYSIS OF SINGAPORE SITUATION
AND WE ARE IN AGREEMENT WITH COURSE OF ACTION RECOMMENDED.

2. COUNTRY TEAM MEMBERS HAVE PROPOSED FOLLOWING CHANGES AND
ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE IN TEXT OF DRAFT PLAN TO CLARIFY CERTAIN
POINTS AND CORRECT A FEW MINOR INACCURACIES. CHANGES ARE KEYED
TO NINE-PAGE DRAFT DATED JULY 5, RECENTLY POUCHED TO US.

A. PAGE 1, LINE 2 TO 5: DELETE FIRST THREE SENTENCES AND
REPLACE WITH THE FOLLOWING: QUOTE SINGAPORE PRESENTS A UNIQUE
PICTURE IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN RIGHTS. THE GOVERNMENT MAKES
RECURRING USE OF DETENTION WITHOUT TRIAL IN SECURITY AND SOME
CRIMINAL CASES. IT HAS ALSO BEEN ACCUSED OF USING THE JUDICIAL
SYSTEM TO HARASS ITS POLITICAL OPPONENTS THROUGH CRIMINAL
CHARGES AND CIVIL SUITS. UNQUOTE

B. PAGE 1, LINES 25 AND 26: DELETE SENTENCE
BEGINNING QUOTE TRIAL BY JURY HAS BEEN ABANDONED
UNQUOTE AND SUBSTITUTE FOLLOWING SENTENCE QUOTE TRIAL
BY JURY HAS BEEN ABANDONED AS UNWORKABLE IN SINGAPORE,
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ON THE GROUNDS THAT EXPERIENCE HAS SHOWN THE ANGLO-
SAXON CONCEPT OF A DISINTERESTED JURY WHICH IGNORES
FAMILIAL, CLAN AND OTHER PERSONAL CONSIDERATIONS IN
REACHING DECISIONS TO BE GENERALLY INCOMPATIBLE WITH
THE VERY DIFFERENT CUSTOMS AND BEHAVIOR PATTERNS OF
THIS CONFUCIAN-ETHIC SOCIETY. UNQUOTE.

C. PAGE 2, LINE 16. CHANGE QUOTE INTERVIEWS

UNQUOTE TO QUOTE INTERVALS UNQUOTE.

D. PAGE 2, LINE 26: INSERT QUOTE TO MAXIMUM FIVE-YEAR TERMS UNQUOTE AFTER QUOTE ELECTED UNQUOTE.

E. PAGE 3, LINES 7 TO 16: IN FIRST FULL PARAGRAPH ON PAGE, REPLACE FOURTH AND SUBSEQUENT SENTENCES WITH THE FOLLOWING: QUOTE FIRST, LIKE NEIGHBORING MALAYSIA, SINGAPORE FORBIDS ACTIVITIES OR PUBLIC STATEMENTS WHICH MIGHT AROUSE COMMUNAL TENSIONS BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT ETHNIC GROUPS IN THIS MULTI-RACIAL SOCIETY, ESPECIALLY FRICTION BETWEEN THE DOMINANT CHINESE AND THE MALAY MINORITY. THE GOVERNMENT HAS INVOKED THE INTERNAL SECURITY ACT TO DETAIN TWO PERSONS ACCUSED OF AROUSING COMMUNAL TENSIONS; ONE OF THEM IS THE FORMER PUBLISHER OF A MAJOR CHINESE LANGUAGE NEWSPAPER WHO HAS BEEN UNDER DETENTION SINCE 1973 BECAUSE HE ALLEGEDLY USED THE NEWSPAPER TO ENCOURAGE CHINESE CHAUVINISM, WHILE THE OTHER IS A POLITICIAN ARRESTED FOLLOWING THE DECEMBER 1976 ELECTIONS ON CHARGES OF INVOKING CHINESE CHAUVINISM IN HIS UNSUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGN. SECONDLY, COMMUNIST POLITICAL ACTIVITIES ARE PROSCRIBED, AND THE GOVERNMENT PROMPTLY DETAINS SUSPECTED COMMUNIST ACTIVISTS UNDER THE INTERNAL SECURITY ACT WHEN THEY ARE DISCOVERED. UNQUOTE.

F. PAGE 3, LINES 25 TO 27, AND PAGE 4, LINES 1 TO 3: DELETE SENTENCE BEGINNING QUOTE FURTHER, A WAVE OF CIVIL LAWSUITS UNQUOTE AND FOLLOWING TWO SENTENCES, CONFIDENTIAL

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SUBSTITUTING THE FOLLOWING: QUOTE FURTHER, SEVERAL CIVIL LAWSUITS FOR LIBEL HAVE BEEN BROUGHT BY PRIME MINISTER LEE AGAINST HIS ERSTWHILE POLITICAL OPPONENTS FOLLOWING THE DECEMBER 1976 ELECTIONS. AFTER HEARING GOVERNMENT-MADE TAPE RECORDINGS OF PUBLIC CHARGES AGAINST THE PRIME MINISTER MADE BY THE DEFENDENTS IN THEIR ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS, THE COURTS HAVE HELD THAT THESE SUITS HAVE MERIT. THEIR NET RESULT, HOWEVER, IS TO DISCOURAGE OPPOSITION POLITICAL ACTIVITY AND EVEN TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT NON-PAP POLITICAL ACTIVITY IS SOMEWHAT TANTAMOUNT TO DISLOYALTY OR SUBVERSION. UNQUOTE.

G. PAGE 4, LINE 20: ADD FOLLOWING SENTENCE TO END OF PARAGRAPH QUOTE SINGAPORE CURRENTLY HAS AN UNEMPLOYMENT RATE OF APPROXIMATELY 3 PERCENT. UNQUOTE.

H. PAGE 5, LINES 4 TO 8: DELETE SENTENCE BEGINNING QUOTE IT MUST BE NOTED IN THIS REGARD UNQUOTE AND FOLLOWING SENTENCE, REPLACING THEM WITH THE FOLLOWING: QUOTE IT MUST BE NOTED IN THIS REGARD THAT A CERTAIN "SIEGE MENTALITY" IS EVIDENT HERE, DERIVING FROM THE SINGAPOREAN LEADERSHIP'S ACUTE CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE COUNTRY'S UNIQUE VULNERABILITY TO OUTSIDE FORCES AND PRESSURES. SINGAPORE IS A SMALL, HEAVILY POPULATED ISLAND WITH A

TOTAL AREA OF 230 SQUARE MILES AND NO NATURAL DEFENSES
WHATSOEVER. (EVEN A GOOD PART OF ITS WATER SUPPLY COMES
FROM MALAYSIA.) ANY FORTRESS ILLUSIONS...UNQUOTE.

I. PAGE 5, LINE 15: INSERT ADDITIONAL PARAGRAPH
IMMEDIATELY AFTER PARAGRAPH ENDING WITH QUOTE JUST ONCE
MAY BE FATAL UNQUOTE, NEW PARAGRAPH TO READ AS FOLLOWS:
QUOTE THIS BASIC FRAME OF MIND IS REINFORCED BY THE LEADER-
SHIP'S CURRENT PERCEPTION OF THE THREAT TO THEIR COUNTRY'S
SECURITY. THEY ARE CONVINCED THAT NON-COMMUNIST SOUTHEAST
ASIA IS A PRIME TARGET OF THE COMMUNIST POWERS -- VIETNAM
AND THE SOVIET UNION IN PARTICULAR. THEY DOUBT THE ABILITY
OF THAILAND AND MALAYSIA TO WITHSTAND MAJOR HANOI-SUPPORTED
SUBVERSION, AND THEY SEE THE TIME FAST APPROACHING WHEN
SINGAPORE ITSELF WILL COME UNDER DIRECT COMMUNIST
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PRESSURE. WHETHER OR NOT THIS ASSESSMENT IS
EXAGGERATED (AS MANY OUTSIDERS THINK), THE SINGAPOREANS
THEMSELVES BELIEVE IT AND IT GREATLY COLORS THEIR
THINKING. UNQUOTE.

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PAGE 01 SINGAP 03323 02 OF 02 050859Z
ACTION EA-09

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-----104921 050902Z /13

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FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8239

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 SINGAPORE 3323

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J. PAGE 7, LINE 2: REPLACE BLANK WITH QUOTE
SECRETARY VANCE'S APRIL 30 SPEECH IN ATHENS, GEORGIA,
UNQUOTE.

K. PAGE 8, LINES 12 TO 21: DELETE SENTENCE BEGINNING
QUOTE THE SINGAPOREANS ARE SOPHISTICATED UNQUOTE AND THE
IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING SENTENCE: REPLACING THEM WITH THE

FOLLOWING PASSAGE: QUOTE THE SINGAPOREANS ARE SOPHISTICATED AND THEY HAVE BEEN OPENLY SKEPTICAL OF OUR EMPHASIS ON HUMAN RIGHTS. THEY SEE IT AS A MOVE, HOWEVER WELL MOTIVATED, TO IMPOSE WHAT THEY CONSIDER TO BE AN ESSENTIALLY AMERICAN SCALE OF VALUES ON NON-AMERICAN SOCIETIES. THEY ALSO URGE THAT WE GIVE GREATER ATTENTION TO THE MAJOR THREAT -- THE EXPANSION OF COMMUNISM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA -- AND EXPAND OUR ENERGIES ON SUCH "SECONDARY ISSUES" AS HUMAN RIGHTS ONLY AFTER THE PRIMARY THREAT HAS BEEN ADEQUATELY CONTAINED. OUR OBJECTIVE IN A DIALOGUE SHOULD BE TO CORRECT MISUNDERSTANDINGS REGARDING OUR HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY (WE CRACK DOWN ONLY ON SMALL COUNTRIES, WE GO AFTER RIGHTWING DICTATORSHIPS BUT IGNORE THE LEFTWING DICTATORSHIPS, THE VALUES WE PROMOTE ARE PAROCHIAL RATHER THAN UNIVERSAL, ETC.) AND TO PERSUADE THE SINGAPOREAN LEADERSHIP THAT AN IMPROVED GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS CLIMATE IS OF SUFFICIENT BENEFIT TO SINGAPORE TO OUTWEIGH THE DISADVANTAGES AND POSSIBLE DESTABILIZATION THAT THE SINGAPOREANS PERCEIVE IN OUR PRESSING

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THE ISSUE. RATHER THAN DISTRACTING US FROM OPPOSITION TO COMMUNIST TOTALITARIANISM, WE SHOULD STRESS THAT A DECENT RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IS IN FACT AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT IN THE STRUGGLE TO KEEP THE COMMUNISTS AT BAY. UNQUOTE.

L. PAGE 8, LINE 21: START NEW PARAGRAPH WITH SENTENCE BEGINNING QUOTE A MATURE, SOPHISTICATED DIALOGUE UNQUOTE.

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